

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Director

Here is the memorandum you asked us to write for Walt Rostow. I might say that the Board pondered the possibilities for Soviet action in several other areas (e.g., India, Cambodia) and on other subjects (e.g., Sino-Soviet relations), and could think of nothing worth adding.

ABBOT SMITH
Director
National Estimates

Attachment

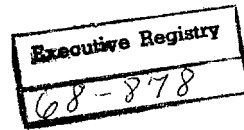
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19 February 1968
(DATE)

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Mr. Walt Rostow

Here is a stab at the paper you asked me to have written when we talked in the evening on Wednesday last. You will note that the earlier memorandum is attached.

If you want this paper to be given distribution to State and/or Defense, please let me know. You have the only copies outside the Agency.

Richard Helms
Richard Helms

Attachments - 2

Soviet Harassment of US Policy

20 February 1968

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

19 February 1968

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DIRECTOR

SUBJECT: Soviet Harassment of US Policy

1. An earlier memorandum* concluded that the USSR was unlikely to pose a major challenge to the US at some other point of confrontation in order to assist the Communist cause in Vietnam. While finding little to credit in this "second front" hypothesis, the memorandum also stated that the Soviets would continue to harass and complicate the American effort in Vietnam and would exploit the American preoccupation there to the benefit of Soviet policy elsewhere. The present memorandum surveys areas and situations where actions of this more limited kind might be taken.

2. Harassment of the US could serve some useful purposes in the Soviet scheme of things. Moscow might expect that it

* "The 'Second Front' Hypothesis," 5 February 1968. Attached.

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could be directed to produce political ferment and perhaps high-level concern in the US. The Soviet leaders might feel that an accumulation of minor tensions, especially in combination with a deterioration of direct US-Soviet relations, would serve to underline more emphatically that the US course in Vietnam was perilous internationally and perhaps dangerous on the domestic political front as well.

3. The Soviets are as likely to try to seize on and profit from an event as they are to try to create the event in the first instance. We do not think, for example, that they conspired with North Korea in the capture of the Pueblo, but it is clear from their reaction that they are happy to see the US suffer over the incident. In fact, in most incidents involving difficulties for the US, the Soviets are quick to try to capitalize on presumed American discomfiture, and, indeed, do not find it unnatural if the US seeks to do the same vis-a-vis the USSR. In this sense at least, the Soviets have always been troublemakers, and they have been hostile to the US in many situations for many years.

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Possible Soviet Moves

4. The Middle East. Opportunities for Soviet troublemaking, designed at least in part to harass Washington, appear to be especially promising in the unstable Middle East. The area is accessible to the USSR, the Soviets are close to and materially support the governments of several key Middle Eastern states, and the USSR maintains a conspicuous naval presence in the Mediterranean. Moreover, both the US (partly because of its ties with Israel) and Western Europe (partly because of its need for oil) are notably sensitive to developments in the area.

5. The Arab-Israeli situation offers the USSR a number of opportunities to increase tensions, short of provoking a renewal of the war, which the Soviets presumably do not want. Moscow could work to impede UN representative Jarring's mission, moving to bring the whole question back before the Security Council. To reinforce Arab intransigence, and to raise Israeli concern, the Soviets could supply the Arabs with improved armaments; they could, for example, provide them (notably the UAR) with conventionally armed surface-to-surface missiles with ranges of

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300-500 miles.* In periods of increased tension, in order to try to forestall Israeli action, they could ostentatiously position their ships in threatened Arab ports and could even use Soviet troops for the same purpose by putting a detachment ashore, say, in Syria. Finally, though at a higher level of risk, the Soviets could offer to provide military protection for an Egyptian effort to clear the northern end of the Suez Canal (an undertaking firmly opposed by the Israelis).

6. Moscow could step up its demonstrations of military strength in the area by making more numerous and more dramatic port calls and by displaying its strategic bombers in additional Arab capitals (e.g., Algiers). It might inaugurate a diplomatic and propaganda campaign against US military and intelligence facilities in Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan. Finally, it might move rapidly to develop a presence in southern Arabia by offering financial and military aid to the new government in South Yemen; heavy British subsidies are scheduled to end in May of this year.

7. Africa. Opportunities for effective harassment of the US in sub-Saharan Africa are on the whole quite limited. The

* If this were done, the missiles would presumably remain under Soviet control; these weapons have not been supplied to any foreign force.

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only major US installation, Kagnev communications station in Ethiopia, is somewhat vulnerable to physical or psychological harassment, but the Soviets have few assets in the area to draw upon, and Haile Selassie favors the US presence. The Soviets have used the Nigerian civil war to expand their presence in Lagos and can be expected to try to exploit their new influence to damage the interests of the US and the UK.

The Far East

8. In Southeast Asia, the Laotian government remains sensitive to Soviet policy and still hopes to cultivate Soviet support. A Soviet threat to sever relations would make Souvanna reappraise his present generally pro-Western attitude; this process would be troublesome for Washington, whatever Souvanna's ultimate decision.

9. In Japan, the Soviets could attempt to pressure or persuade the government to reduce its support of US policy and to end its special military relations with the US. As inducements, they could offer to enlarge the already favorable development of Soviet-Japanese economic relations. They might indicate a new willingness to consider the return of some former

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Japanese islands in order to increase Japanese pressures on the US for the return of Okinawa. Pressure could also be brought by publicizing the use of bases on Okinawa for direct combat operations in Vietnam.

10. In Korea, the Soviet leaders are aware that the Pueblo incident has caused embarrassment and concern in the US and has strained relations between the US and South Korea. They might wish to encourage the maintenance of tensions at a high level. Advice to and support of Pyongyang might suffice for this purpose. Support would probably include increased military aid; some of the advice, however, would probably be cautionary because the Soviets almost certainly do not wish to see a resumption of the Korean War.

11. Europe. The Soviets still consider Western Europe an especially attractive and convenient area in which to try to damage American interests, but in recent years they have tended to take a long view of their prospects. They probably still estimate that to abandon their relatively low key approach in favor of renewed bluster and threats would jeopardize their whole sizeable investment in European detente. Nevertheless, West Berlin, as a potential target for Soviet troublemaking, is

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probably never far removed from the minds of the Soviet leaders. The Soviets could come to feel that limited harassments of the city, or perhaps still greater pressures on West German activities there, could be useful as a means of reminding the US of the USSR's ability to create a crisis in Europe at any time. A particular virtue of the Berlin situation is its susceptibility to Soviet management: if things heat up too much, Moscow can always draw back.

12. Bi-Lateral Relations. The Soviets have been careful to keep some lines open to Washington throughout the Vietnamese war. They have, in addition, been willing -- for reasons of their own -- to conclude or to continue negotiations on a number of specific agreements with the United States. Should the Soviet leaders decide that, because of the course of the Vietnam war or some other development, it would serve their interests to threaten to end all such contacts, they would certainly do so. They might give substance to the threat by failing to renew some old agreements, such as the cultural exchange agreement, or refusing to ratify some new, such as the consular treaty. In general, the USSR might begin to behave toward the United States in a much more unpleasant and bellicose way, in its diplomatic relations, its propaganda, and its overall posture.

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13. Military Demonstrations. The Soviets are clearly becoming more active and more mobile in displaying and deploying their military forces. They were quick to reinforce their fleet in the Sea of Japan as a gesture of support to their North Korean ally and as a show of strength for the benefit of the US as well. Their activities in the Middle East and, most recently, their bomber aircraft exercises close to North America are probably also intended in part to demonstrate that the USSR has powerful forces and can use them effectively. More submarine patrols off US coasts might be another gesture of this sort. The Soviets might step up the tempo and extend the range of these activities if they thought that it would divert US attention from Vietnam or create general US concern about relations with the USSR.

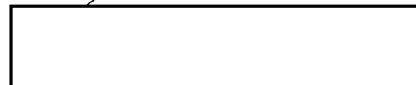
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14. None of the moves indicated above is estimated as probable. They illustrate the kind of steps the Soviets might entertain should they decide to show greater displeasure or menace toward the US in the present context. Quite apart from such deliberate measures, however, the ordinary flow of events in many unstable areas gives the Soviets plentiful opportunity

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to manifest hostility to the US, and to link this attitude
somehow to US policy in Vietnam.

FOR THE BOARD OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES:



ABBOT SMITH
Chairman

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